
 Robert P. Pula, “Bob Pula | Interview on Alfred Korzybski & General Semantics”, InstituteofGS, 2003·11·16 (uploaded 2013·01·24).

This transcript was composed of a three-part video originally uploaded to InstituteofGS  channel, titled “Bob Pula | Interview on Alfred Korzybski & General Semantics”.

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INTERVIEW ON ALFRED KORZYBSKI & GENERAL SEMANTICS


ROBERT P. PULA

2003/11/16

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Transcript, Pt 01

Go to  YouTube for part 1 of the video.

Pt 01, Description

In the first part of a three-part interview, Robert P. Pula, an eminent scholar on Alfred Korzybski and general semantics, talks about how he developed his interest in Korzybski and general semantics.

This interview was recorded on November 16th, 2003.

For more information on general semantics, please visit the website of the Institute of General Semantics:  generalsemantics.org.

Pt 01, 00:00:00

Pula: It goes back to about 1960 or so, or 59 even. I first heard the name Korzybski at some kind of a family party, when a young engineer from Purdue, who was a Baltimorean friend of ours, a friend particularly to my twin brother, Eddie, at Loyola College. I said something at this gathering, and he said, “Oh, yeah, Korzybski.” Well, I didn’t realize that I had said something that was reflecting Korzybski’s views, because I’d never heard of Korzybski at that point.

And about a year later, I was at a shore party with Monsignor Jawulski, who was at Holy Rosary Church, where I partly grew up. And he was putting out a parish newspaper, very sophisticated for a local parish, although it was a very big parish, and all that. And he’d been running a column in there, which was written then by Mira Savari, who lived near us up on Gulf Street. And she... While we were at a shore party, Jawulski and I, and we were drinking beer and chatting. And what had happened was that Ms. Savari, who had got about six or so of these articles on notable Poles, which Jawulski, the Monsignor, was publishing in his parish newspaper because he wanted the young people, the parish in particular, to have a kind of a ration of Polish culture, knowledge about their Polish background, contributions that Poles made to world civilization.

Well, she had run out of gas, apparently, and she wanted out. So, Jawulski asked me if I would take over. So, I did. And I did a few articles: Malinowski, Polish mathematics, stuff like that. And then, having had that clue about Korzybski, I decided... I was thinking about what can the next article be about. So I said, “Well, I think I’ll do one on Korzybski.” So I proceeded to read about 25 books, including *Science and Sanity*, but mostly, I was at that early stage influenced by Hayakawa’s book, *Language in Thought and Action*, which is kind of a semi-popular introduction of Korzybski, concentrating on English, composition and communication, stuff like that; not doing much of the scientific background. And Russell Myers, who was a famous neurosurgeon and neurologist, etc., a famous teacher of neuroscience, physiology, psychology, all kinds of stuff. I read some of his stuff.

And on the basis of primarily those two books, I wrote my article for the Rosarian, for Holy Rosary Parish newspaper. So that's how I started.

The interviewer: Where's Holy Rosary located?

Pula: It's on Chester Street between Bank Street and Eastern Avenue. It's a very large complex, huge Romanesque church, I think, completed in about 1927, just about the time that I was born, which was 1928. And it really came to be one of the wealthiest parishes in the Baltimore Archdiocese. So much so that, as I've heard, the archbishops of Baltimore were constantly asking for loans from Holy Rosary to help out, apparently, other parishes that weren't doing as well.

We used to have a joke, I may have said it in the earlier video that we made. This married couple, young married couple, are having a discussion on Saturday night... because Holy Rosary was famous for being able to raise a lot of money – Monsignor Mahoviak, who was the master at that. And the joke was that this couple is talking about Saturday night, and they say, “Well, shall we buy a house or go to Holy Rosary for mass tomorrow?” That was one of our... we had a lot of neighborhood related jokes in those days, and that was one of the best ones.

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The interviewer: Now, after you wrote that article, and you got to become familiar with Korzybski through his writings, what spurred your interest in further exploring Korzybski?

Pula: Well, what I read, especially when I started reading *Science and Sanity*, I was very struck. I've read,... you know, sometimes people accuse me of going for Korzybski just because I'm of Polish descent. And there's something to that, but that isn't the reason I have devoted my life, basically, to understanding Korzybski and promulgating it to people at large through my writings and teaching. I was so struck by it once I got what I call the neuro-linguistic point. And that is the point that... Language is produced by brain, and in a reciprocal feedback way, language structures brain. Once I got that point, which is very clearly made in the “Introduction to the Second Edition” of *Science and Sanity*, I said, quoting Ray <?>'s father, “Holy crap! If this guy is right, almost everybody I've read so far is wrong,” including Thomas Aquinas and Kant, and a whole bunch of people. This recognition that the human brain produces everything that we talk about, and then, having done that, that production further *restructures* the human brain – that is something that had never appeared before in philosophy – in the West or East.

So that's what hooked me. That was in about probably about 1962 or 63. And as I went along, I decided, “God, this guy is terrifically important. I have to write a biography of him.” And I initially intended to write a biography for young people, which is now mature to the level where I'm going to write a book for “young thinkers” – young evaluators – called *Brains are Us*. And I'm even going to interrupt some of my work with Korzybski's biography, which I'm working on now to produce this. I'll do this popularly but as soundly as I can, so that it can be accessible to young readers – middle school level or something like that.

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So I've written a review of a book by a fellow named Joseph Wyrwal in Detroit who owned a company called Endurance Press. (I really feel much more comfortable looking at you than the damn camera. So tell your father to take a rest.) So I wrote this review, which was published in the Rosarian, by the way, in Father Jawulki's, or Monsignor Jawulki's parish newspaper. Can you imagine that? A book, basically a sociological text, about the Poles in America, a review of that book, published by a kid from Fells Point, in the Holy Rosary Parish newspaper, called the Rosarian, of all things. I mean, this is good stuff.

So anyway, I published that review, and then Wyrwal, the owner of Endurance Press, used quotations from the review in publicizing his own book. So, based on that, I wrote to him and suggested that I write... He had a series of books for young people. I suggested that I would write a biography of Korzybski. He was very interested, but I, being very naive at the time, not an established author, suggested that he should give me some money to support this effort. Well, of course, publishers don't work that way with unknown writers by any means, so that never happened. But the notion of writing a biography of Korzybski has persisted.

Early on, I read in Korzybski, he said, "Well, no one can write my biography, who does not know my work." In fact, he also said, "My life is my work. Don't waste your time going around the world and talking to people and getting petty details. The work is my life." Well, I took that seriously, so that's why at the age of 75, I have just started the actual writing of the biography, while my son Victor continues to do research at Columbia University at the Korzybski archive there. So, that's how it all got started.

The interviewer: And then after you wrote that article, how did you get involved with the Institute?

Pula: How did I get what?

The interviewer: How did you get involved with the Institute? Who did you call?

Pula: Well, in 1965, I wrote a letter to M. Kendig, Marjorie Mercer Kendig, but she went by M. Kendig, or just, most often just plain Kendig. A remarkable woman, kind of a Katharine Hepburn type, but a very, very important scholar. She had been the director at Barstow school for girls. I don't remember at the moment where it was, Kansas City, Kansas or Missouri, but they're pretty close together – over a bridge, you know. She was at Columbia where she got her master's. She heard about Korzybski's book *Science and Sanity*. And on the train... And of course in those days – probably early 1934, shortly after *Science and Sanity* was published – she read that book complete on the train from New York to Kansas City. That'll tell you what kind of girl she was.

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She invited Korzybski to come to Barstow to train her staff so that they could better teach the girls at school. They were <?> about two years or so. (You want me to go faster?)

The interviewer: No, but Bob, what I wanted you to focus on is, we're going to talk about Korzybski later. Your involvement, you called Kendig, and then how did you get involved?

Pula: Yeah, well, I'm getting to that.

The interviewer: Oh, okay. Yeah, how did you get involved with the Institute?

Pula: Let's hold it off for just a minute. I'll have a little sip of vodka, and then maybe I'll speak more quickly – (drinking) – not necessarily more coherently, but more quickly to honor your production values. (touching nose repeatedly; This is not just touching my nose. This is wiping moisture.)

So anyway, Kendig had Korzybski at Barstow. He did some work there with her staff. Then, in 1938 she became a close associate of his. In 1938, they jointly set up the Institute of General Semantics in Chicago. After Korzybski's death in 1950, she took over as director of the Institute. She had just established the *General Semantics Bulletin*, which is still functioning. It's up to Volume 70 at this point. It's a very important journal, and long-lasting. A lot of journals of that kind go for maybe two or three years, and because of money mainly, they collapse, but she was able to maintain it. And Charlotte Read, who was her assistant, and I and others have kept it going at a very high level. Anyway, so that's who Kendig was.

So in 1965 I had reached a point because of my studies, and I was already using general-semantics in my teaching, and I taught a whole lot of places. In 1965, I wrote to Kendig, saying that I wanted to write this biography of Korzybski, and I would like to come to the Institute to meet her. Well, she passed me off to Charlotte Read, who was Korzybski's executive secretary from 1939 to 1950 when he died. She was also his editorial assistant and <?> – very important person in Korzybski's work.

So, Charlotte Read wrote to me and invited me to come to her place in Manhattan, Columbia University housing, her husband being a professor of English at Columbia University at the time. A world-famous linguist, the guy who established the origin of "OK", among other things. Very prolific and great scholar. So she invited me in December 1965. And I went there and we met, she gave me some wine and cheese, etc. We had a lovely time. Alan Walker Read, famous linguist, at one point came in to, as he admitted later, "examine the specimen". And he spent about 10 minutes with me chatting, and then he went back to his... lair, where he did his linguistic stuff, piled high to the ceiling with 3x5 cards. 39 Paramount Avenue in Manhattan, Morningside Heights, just about a block down from Broadway, where the main Columbia campus was located.

So, from that point on, Charlotte Read was, I guess that we could say she was pleased by me. I don't know why. So, she invited me to take a weekend seminar the next spring. After I explained to her why I was there and what I wanted to do, she said, "Well, I think you should" – this was a scholarship kind of arrangement – "take this seminar in the spring in New York". Then in 1966, she invited me to take the two-week, it was then, a two-week seminar at Bard College in New York, north of Pekin City. So that's really how I got into it in a big way.

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Well, in that very seminar I made some remarks from the floor about Thomas Aquinas and scholastic philosophy as being the kind of a key aristotelian system, or point of view, anyway. And I made the point that Thomas Aquinas baptized Aristotle. And Korzybski, of course, was <? > a, what he calls a non-aristotelian system. So my remarks were greeted with great interest. So much so, that I was asked to give a 15-minute statement within Dr. Ken Johnson's session, which he wasn't very happy about, to talk about scholasticism and aristotelianism and Thomas Aquinas and so forth. That went so well that people in the seminar were starting a movement to say, "Hey, give Pula more time to talk." Of course, the people who were on staff didn't want to give up their time to this snotnose who came out of the room and started talking about Thomas Aquinas. So we didn't do any more that year.


But the next year Dr. Johnson, who was a professor... first, he was a chemist initially than a science writer but then he wound up in communications and he taught general-semantics at University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, I think. The next summer, for some reason at the university he couldn't make it as a staff member to the seminar, so I was asked to fill in for him. That's when I started being on the seminar staffs. In the early 70s I had become the lead lecturer for stressing the Korzybskian formulations.

The interviewer: Now, where are you with regards to the biography?

Pula: I've done much research in Poland and visiting places that are related to the Korzybski, his estate. Former estate because it has gone through several hands since the early 20th century. And I've researched at the University of Warsaw, etc. A lot of research at Columbia. So I'm about, I think I would say about halfway through what I need to go through at Columbia. I still have to go to Johns Hopkins where Korzybski had many close associations and was often visiting there. But all that, most of that stuff I've turned over to my son Victor, showed him the ropes. He's registered as a researcher at Columbia. So he has a card to get into the library and look at stuff. I have started writing the text because I have all that I need for roughly the first half of Korzybski's life, namely the Polish half. What Victor is finishing up when he makes his trips to New York is going through the rest of the Korzybski's archives, which cover the part that he's working on. It comes from, I would say, 1924 to 1950, when Korzybski died. So I've started the writing, and Victor's job is to complete the <?> research so that when I finish with the Polish half of his life, he will have provided me with what I need for the rest of his life here in America, which started in December 1915. So there you are.

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Transcript, Pt. 02

Go to  YouTube for part 2 of the video.

Pt 02, Description

In the second part of a three-part interview, Robert P. Pula, an eminent scholar on Alfred Korzybski and general semantics, talks about Korzybski's ancestry, his early life in Poland, and his book *Manhood of Humanity*.

Pt 02, 00:00:00

The interviewer: Tell us a little bit about Korzybski. Where was he born? When?

Pula: He was born in Warsaw. I believe, July 3rd, 1979.

The interviewer: 1879.

Pula: Oh, yeah right. Thank you. 1879 And into a family with very old records, going back to the 11th century, Polish aristocrats. Now, he was the... The Korzybski family was connected with the Skarbek – I think we should call it a – clan, which was not at the magnatial level, – of magnates, the very great aristocrats who owned land that was larger than most European countries – but they were close to it. They were certainly far above the lower szlachta, the middle-to-lower szlachta nobility.

The interviewer: Can you explain what “szlachta” means?

Pula: “Szlachta” is a Polish term, which is actually, interestingly enough, of German origin, which refers to the nobility, which in Poland was very numerous. In no part of the country was it less than 10% of the population. Overall, it was probably more like 14%. In Chopin's day, in the early 19th century, the szlachta in Mazowsze, – which is the province or województwo [voivodeship], in which Warsaw is located and where Chopin lived – the number of the nobility in that province was as high as 37%. And it's one of the reasons why Polish culture has such a, shall we say, interesting character, because these people, the szlachta, were much committed to intellectual brilliance and achievement and flair, so forth. They were the people who supplied the husaria, the Polish winged horsemen, Polish cavalry. They were actually predominant among the Polish flyers who flew with the RAF in World War II in the Battle of Britain and later. So that szlachta influence has had a very large impact on Polish culture at large. Even peasants have adopted and adapted szlachta notions to their own lives. That's why you see so much kissing of hands all over Poland wherever you go today. So that's what the szlachta is.

Korzybskis were at the upper level, but they were not magnates, although they did have connections with some of the magnatial families, like the Tatoists. Maybe it should be Tatoi in Polish for the plural. So they were quite important. The important thing for Korzybski's life, for what

he accomplished, was that a very large number of his ancestors were not just aristocrats, but they were working aristocrats. They were scholars, soldiers, ecclesiastics, lawyers, engineers. His father was an engineer, for example, who worked in the Russian communications ministry, and traveled all over the Russian Empire doing his stuff.

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And that's an interesting point there because, you know, after the partitioning of Poland, and especially related to the insurrections of 1832 and 1863, many Poles, mostly nobility, were shipped into eastern Russia and then further into Siberia. Very often they had to walk there; sometimes in chains. But when they got there and "settled down", they proceeded to do research. The botany of the region around Lake Baikal was done by a fellow, I think his name was Dybowski. Hundreds and hundreds of these Polish exiles did the basic geological, botanical, all kinds of research that let the Russians know what the hell they had in Siberia. I find that very amusing and also very pleasing. So, that's who the Korzybskis were.

He was born in Warsaw. His family was well off. His mother was where the title of count came from. He was called Count Korzybski in America. He himself was not very well impressed with that notion of being a count. He thought it was rather an intrusion, you know, to be able to move around in a realistic way in the world. But his mother was very much concerned with that kind of rank.

He was educated in Warsaw, but also after he graduated from the Warsaw Polytech as a chemical engineer, he toured Western Europe. He attended lectures. He was kind of an itinerant scholar in Germany and France and Italy. And he had a very interesting career – *karier* ("career" with Polish accent) as Ignacy Friedman says – in Italy. The most famous thing about that is that he was known as a kind of a <?>. He was a young nobleman on the loose. He learned fencing with sabers primarily, in Poland. He was a very adventurous, fun-loving character. And he had lots of affairs with Italian women. So much so that he was known to the younger Italians who knew him as the "maladetto pollaco", the "accursed Pole." And he was involved in duels with members of Victor Emanuel's guard, etc.

The most important thing he did in Rome was he ran into Prince Radziwill, who was probably the leading lay Catholic in Poland, who was visiting Rome to report to the Pope on the state of Catholicism in Poland. He knew Korzybski because Korzybski's father, the engineer, had enrolled Korzybski in this lay group of Polish young Catholics, noblemen to beef up their Catholicism, etc. They're like the Opus Dei outfit today. Radziwill ran into Korzybski in Rome and, of course, he knew him from Poland, so he asked him to give a talk to about 50 cardinals and the Governor of the Jesuit order, at that time, Spaniard named <?>. And so Korzybski gave this talk to them called "The Relationship of the Polish Youth Toward the Clergy, and the Clergy Toward Polish Youth". He made a big impact, kind of like a signal about what this guy was going to become. And this was the guy who was, meanwhile, when he wasn't talking to the cardinals, he was having duels with these Italian guards, usually over women. That was a major thing that he did in Italy.

Pt 02, 00:10:28

Then he went back to Poland in time for his father's death, which was in 1904. And from that point on, he was kind of in charge of the Korzybskis' affairs, the estate, the dealing with the peasants, dealing with the Russians, Cossacks, etc., who were working on the estate to supplement their meager income from being soldiers in the Russian Empire.

The interviewer: Can you discuss a little bit about Poland's political environment at that time?

Pula: We're talking about 1879 to 1915, when Korzybski came to North America. Also, we're talking about 1879 – 14 years after the insurrection of 1863, which was a major insurrection. Mainly initiated and led by the nobility, but really for the first time... Not the first time, because many peasants had been involved in Kościuszko insurrection of 1794. But this was the, well, let's say the second time that large numbers of peasants were involved, both in Poland and Lithuania, and this was primarily directed against the Russian occupation, which was a function of the third partition of 1795. So Korzybski was born roughly 13, 14 years after that insurrection was suppressed. His father was among the, like Joseph Conrad's uncle Tadeusz Bobrowski, was among what's sometimes called the conciliationists, those who were very patriotic, but who considered themselves realistic. They said, "The best thing we can do for Poland is work along within this system to provide for the people at large." That was Korzybski's father's view and Joseph Conrad's uncle's view, too. Korzybski grew up with that.

His father was an engineer, and he taught him a lot about mathematics and science when he was very young. This is very important for how Korzybski developed. When he returned to Poland in 1904 – just in time for his father's death – he did such things... Actually before that he had, for example, set up a school on his estate for the peasants because he felt that they should be educated, and he was very popular with "his" so-called peasants. He set up the school while that was strictly against the Russian law and he was threatened with being shipped off to Siberia but his father had enough clout in the Russian government that he was able to get him off. This was shortly before he died, so that was a narrow escape, because if that had happened, we wouldn't have this book today (showing the book): *Science and Sanity*, second printing of the 5th edition. It says here, "With preface by Robert P. Pula." And that's why we're here.

Pt 02 00:15:08

The interviewer: When did Korzybski begin to write down his thoughts about semantics?

Pula: General-semantics.

The interviewer: General-semantics. When did he begin to think that he could be a scholar, a writer, a creator?

Pula: Not until he'd been through World War I. He was wounded by artillery fire. He was lame to begin with, but he was also wounded in the hip, I believe, by artillery fire on the "eastern front". So he knew what was going on in the world.

The interviewer: And for the record, who was he fighting with?

Pula: He was fighting with the Russian army against the Germans. And as I have suggested elsewhere, I think that he saw this as part of the thousand-year competition between Poles and Germans. In other words, he didn't volunteer to be in the Russian army because he was in love with the Russian system, but he was determined not to be taken over by the Germans.

The interviewer: What rank did he have?

Pula: Well, it's an interesting thing. Since he was a member of the higher nobility, he really almost didn't have a rank. He was just a nobleman serving in the army. Technically, when he first enlisted, all of these nobles who were in the Russian army, except those, of course, who became generals and so forth, were called privates, but it was known that they were special-class privates, because they were the nobility. And indeed, he did very significant work, primarily in intelligence. He would interrogate prisoners, for example, since he knew many languages. Although he was technically called a private, he was actually functioning at least, I suppose, maybe at a colonel level. (So, ask me another question.)

The interviewer: Okay. So, let's say between 1904 and 1914, what was he doing?

Pula: He was teaching at a gymnasium in Warsaw and probably one in... I can't bring up the name right now, – it starts with an M – but somewhere away from Warsaw. He taught physics, chemistry, French, and German. He was also running the estate. His mother was not at all competent to do things like that.

The interviewer: Did he have any siblings?

Pula: Yes, he had a sister named Adrianna with whom he didn't really have much contact. Once she was sent to Vienna to a Catholic school – School of Sacred Hearts – from that point on, she really lived away from the family and didn't have much contact with Korzybski. They corresponded, but there wasn't much contact there. And indeed, in 1947, a fellow named Ken Keyes, who was interviewing Korzybski for a biography, asked him about his sister, and he said just "who knows". So many people were killed there in World War II, and he hadn't heard anything.

The interviewer: Was Korzybski actively involved...?

Pula: I know from my research in Warsaw that she did, in fact, survive the war briefly and then died.

The interviewer: Where did she die? Was it in Poland?

Pula: I'm hearing in my head Milanów.

The interviewer: Okay, so it was in Poland.

Pula: Suburb of Warsaw.

Pt 02, 00:20:19

The interviewer: Was Korzybski involved with the revival of Polish culture in Poland at the turn of the previous century?

Pula: No. I would say no in this sense. He was not producing anything. He didn't write anything until he came to North America, and specifically America. His first publication was just before *Manhood of Humanity*, was a paper that he published, I guess, in 1920, or early 21. His first significant publication in English, which he remarkably got, having started studying English in 1916 in Canada, with this guy named Gilchrest, who was a Canadian... Korzybski was teaching Gilchrest French, and Gilchrest was teaching Korzybski English. This was at the munitions camp in Petawawa, Canada.

The interviewer: What year?

Pula: He went there in January 1916. So this process started probably, let's say, in the spring of 1916 and by 1921 he wrote *Manhood of Humanity* with help from a mathematician in Columbia named Cassius Keyser who wrote in a very sort of <?> English style. Korzybski's wife, whom he married in 1919, used to refer to Cassius Keyser's style as "that church organ prose". She much preferred Korzybski's original writing of *Manhood of Humanity* to what Keyser "helped" Korzybski to do with it later on.

The interviewer: Now, leading up to that, who would you say influenced Korzybski when he was in Poland before making the transition to the United States?

Pula: I think it's safe to say that Korzybski was influenced by everybody. Here's the list of people to whom Korzybski dedicates his book (showing the page). It goes from Aristotle to Ludwig Wittgenstein. It includes Einstein... It's a bunch. As far as Poland is concerned, the name that comes to mind immediately, aside from all of the thinkers of the Polish tradition, <?> Modzelewski, Kopernik, all these people. But in the modern era, the 19th century, people like Bronisław Malinowski, the anthropologist, Lukasiewicz, the mathematical logician, the inventor of multi-valued logics, etc., and a whole array of people. He wrote several times, including in *Science and Sanity*, "What I say, has been said by many, many times before." But his claim, which I consider just fine, "What I have done is gather this stuff, plus some of my original notion, into a system which can be taught." That's the achievement of Korzybski.

Pt 02, 00:25:20

The interviewer: Now, what did he do leading up to *Manhood of Humanity*, that you would say would be a function of his thought processes leading up to the *Manhood of Humanity* and ultimately resulting in *Science and Sanity*?

Pula: Well, it goes back to when he was an infant. He said on several occasions, "When I was an infant, I didn't speak. I just looked around." And he claimed that he really didn't speak until he was about five years old. But he clearly remembers,... at which point he says his father gave him

the “feel” of the Calculus. This business of just, you know, not thinking that you have to <?> out something about how you think things are. First, you have to take a look around. And he often said in seminars when somebody would ask him a question, if he didn’t know, he would say, “I don’t know, let’s see, let’s take a look.” So that orientation dates back to his infancy, and I consider that “psychologically” the most important engine which drove him to produce this kind of stuff (points at the copy of *S&S*). He apparently was born extensional, as we say. “Extensional” means oriented toward facts, observation, the non-verbal level first, before you start telling people how the world is going.

The interviewer: Now, you said he came to the United States in about 1916, or was it Canada?

Pula: December 1915. And then in January he came to New York. He was coming on a mission from the Russian army to supervise the manufacture and shipment of ammunition, horseshoes, stuff like that, to Russia. So that’s why he was sent here; he was on an official mission for the Russian government.

The interviewer: When did he make the transition from Poland to the United States?

Pula: He really didn’t make it fully until after the publication of *Science and Sanity*. Throughout the 20s, he and his wife... I mean, there’s lots of correspondence where he’s talking to people, that he and his wife are going to live in Poland. Up until the publication of *Science and Sanity*, he listed his addresses as New York and Warsaw. So, it was not a sharp thing. A famous German-American scientist... What the hell is his name? Well I don’t have to say his name. I can’t think of it right now. Anyway, he finally in about... early on, maybe in the mid-20s, he knew that Korzybski was thinking about going back to Poland, and he insisted that, “No, you should stay here and complete your work.”

The interviewer: And here being?

Pula: America.

The interviewer: Columbia? New York? Where?

Pula: Well, at that point Korzybski must have been in La Jolla, California. He was all over the United States from the time that he came, especially after publishing *Manhood of Humanity*. He lectured all over the place, visiting institutions, had a close relation with some of the leading scientists and psychiatrists, people like that, at Johns Hopkins here in Baltimore. So he was very, very active, but he was so tempted to go back because, after all, he had an estate there, a family there.

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The interviewer: Who was running the estate? I mean, he was obviously here, but back then you didn’t have telephones...

Pula: Well, that's an interesting question. The main thing to run at that point in the 1920s was this huge apartment house in Warsaw that was owned by Korzybski's mother. He said that it had 25 apartments of four to five rooms each. It was destroyed in World War II. I went there and saw the replacement building in, I guess, 2001.

His mother had a guy named Pawlowski, who was the manager that Korzybski didn't trust one bit. And indeed, she eventually married him in 1931, much to Korzybski's distress here in America. There's a copious correspondence between Korzybski and his mother throughout this period of time, until her death in 1937. He was trying desperately to get her on an even keel, because he thought she was just being goofy and throwing her money away on this guy. And there was also a kind of a housekeeper, but who was a young woman, – younger than Pawlowski considerably, and much younger than Countess Korzybska. So what Korzybski was perceiving, was Pawlowski, who was married to his mother, is having yummy dealings with this young woman, and meanwhile, consuming the Countess' money. So that was the situation.

At one point, Korzybski and his wife, who was named Mira Edgerly, lent the Countess \$5,000, which would be probably something like 50,000 today. She did not repay before she died, and on one of her trips to Poland Charlotte Read, – who, as we mentioned, was Korzybski's executive secretary, editorial consultant, etc. – when she was in Poland, she tried to retrieve that money through the Polish courts, but this was in like 1917 roughly. Of course, that just wasn't doable. For one thing, so much paperwork was destroyed in the Warsaw uprising particularly – just about all of the Korzybski family records, except some stuff that Janusz Krajewski, a researcher, was able to find. So that just wasn't doable.

The interviewer: So at some point in time, Korzybski decided, "This is it, I'm staying here in America, I'm going to do my work."

Pula: Yeah. There kept being not just difficulties, but creative opportunities, because he was being invited to lecture all over the place, and he was working very hard on his stuff. His wife was painting all over the... at least the western hemisphere and Europe, where she knew Gertrude Stein in Paris, for example, things like that.

They had this desire to go, but meanwhile they were both so busy with their creative work that they just kept not going. Eventually, he did go to the International Conference of Mathematicians of the Slavic countries in 1929, September, in Warsaw. There he met and talked with people that he'd been corresponding with, Łukasiewicz, Kotarbiński, Chwistek, all these philosophers, mathematical logicians, etc., of the famous Warsaw School of the interwar period. But he just went there for that conference and then came back to the US. And as I said, by the time of the publication of *Science and Sanity*, he had realized that, well, he was going to finish his life in America, because that's where his work was. By that point, he was very well known and sought after – his whole career was here.

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The interviewer: Have you discovered in any of his correspondence his thoughts about Poland's chances, let's say, between World War I and World War II of really succeeding in this effort to revitalize the culture secure its borders and project its culture outwards?

Pula: Yeah, he was very much a Polish patriot and I guess it was 1919. I don't remember correctly. I have a letter from Korzybski to (Józef) Piłsudski. Piłsudski, Marshal of Poland, defeated the Russians outside of Warsaw in 1920, etc.; he was sometimes called the George Washington of Poland. Well, this letter from Korzybski to Piłsudski is basically offering himself, Korzybski's self, as a consultant to the Polish government and – almost like a job application: “There are lots of things I could do, lots of things I know. I could be useful to you. I would like to help out.” He also wrote... It was the first thing he had to write before he could write *Manhood of Humanity*. And it was, I think it's called “A Polish Soldier”, comments on the war. I'll have to give you a copy of that. And it's a very thoughtful, passionate statement about how people think about war, and how it is for those who are in the battles: the terror, the bloodshed, etc., and how destructive it is to human consciousness. It's a very strong, very strong thing.

The interviewer: Yet, regardless of...

Pula: So, another thing I refer back to his educating the peasants at his estate, which was strictly against the law under the Russians. He was from childhood on, very much focused on the need for education, for *developing* human beings, all human beings, so that they can make their lives better.

The interviewer: So, before leading up to *Science and Sanity*, let's talk a little bit about his work here in the United States. First of all, how did he support himself? And second of all, talk a little bit about his wife, his family unit, so to speak, here in the United States, and where did he settle so eventually he could do his work and create such magnificent work like *Science and Sanity*?

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Pula: He lived in many places, New York, Brooklyn. For a time, when he first started to work on *Manhood of Humanity* he lived in a so-called abandoned farm. It wasn't really “abandoned”, because the guy who owned it still lived there – fellow named Jesse Bennett, and he invited Korzybski to come and stay there to do his work. And people from Johns Hopkins like Pearl, Wilbur of the Wilbur Clinic, people like that used to come down to this place in Arnold, Maryland for four-day weekends. And they would all talk together. They would go there, because Bennett liked to have people come and do that kind of things. And these people from Baltimore, from Johns Hopkins, mainly, were very interested in what Korzybski was up to, so they were having these practically seminars you might say.

He lived all over the country here, sometimes in Chicago, La Jolla, California, at the Scripps Institute. His wife was a very well-known painter, and she painted mainly so-called “upper-class”

people: princes and princesses, and countesses, and lords in England and South America, all over the place. She was especially famous for painting on large paddles of ivory, which she specially imported from Africa. And she liked that because the paint on the ivory has this kind of luminescence that comes through the ivory that greatly beautifies the enlivens the painting.

She was very popular. So she very much provided the money as a function of her painting, because she got paid very well. She was known all over the world, all over the Western Hemisphere and Europe, anyway. Even people like Gainsborough, I think it was, spoke very highly of her. She was the one who insisted on keeping the “count” business going, because she found it very useful to be billed as Countess Korzybska, who will come to your estate for three or four months, get to know you first, and then thank you. That’s the way she operated.

She was responsible for the first publications of Gertrude Stein. When she was in Paris, she knew somebody in London who was the publisher, and she took Gertrude Stein to London to meet with this guy, Logan, I think his name was. And sure enough, that eventuated in Gertrude Stein’s first publication. So they were at the top of the intellectual and social world.

The interviewer: Now, before we get to *Manhood of Humanity* and *Science and Sanity*, there was a major event occurring in the world at that time which affected Poland greatly.

Pula: Did what?

The interviewer: A major event in Poland that affected not only Poland, but eventually the rest of the world. And that was the Bolshevik attack on Poland, as you mentioned earlier, in 1920. Stalin at that time was in the military. He faced Piłsudski, who you mentioned earlier. But that is a very key point, because Poland stopped at that point the Bolsheviks movement – west.

Pula: Before that...

The interviewer: But let me ask you this, though. The driving force behind the Bolshevik Revolution, as we know, was the thinking and writing and philosophy of Marx. To what extent was Korzybski aware of Marx and also Lenin, the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, and of the eventual attack on Poland, and the ultimate defeat. Where was Korzybski in all of this, in his thinking, in his writings, in his outlook?

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Pula: I know that you know that Poland was one of the major places of origination for what we call socialism, but a democratic socialism. I won’t go into this, but I consider that an ultimate oxymoron, because if the government is going to be the employer of first and last resort, then we’re not talking about a free society. But that’s another matter.

If you read *Manhood of Humanity*, which we’ll talk more about later, you’ll realize, “Wow, a lot of this sounds socialistic”, because he’s concerned about the society’s involvement in itself through government. And there’s no question about that. At the same time, he has a very keen under-

standing of capital. Much more so than Marx. And he knew Marx quite well. He also knew other great Polish socialist writers who influenced Lenin, by the way, who lived in Kraków for a couple of years before he went to Russia to make the revolution. You know, Lenin was a Russian nobleman. He wasn't no proletarian. In fact, it's interesting. If you look at the history of socialism and Marxism, most of the originators and leaders, at the beginning, at least, we're from the nobility.


Korzybski was quite aware of all this stuff. He was in America and Canada as "an agent of Russia". When the first Revolution in 1917 occurred and the Tzarist regime collapsed, Korzybski then got involved with recruiting for the Polish-French military commission in the United States, which was recruiting troops to fight in Europe on the side of the Allies from 1917–1918. Korzybski did a whole lot of work. He also lectured mostly in the north, well, in the Mid-Atlantic region, but also further north, and as far as West Virginia and Ohio, selling liberty bonds. He was a lecturer for the US government. And he had got very good responses. He was mostly lecturing to workers.

When he got into the recruiting business, there was a population of about 1 million Poles in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, and that sort of area. And he was involved in recruiting there. He had problems with that. He considered that Paderewski was selling Polish blood. So he wanted the Polish army to be independent, like the Pershing's army. You know, initially, Pershing was being with American expeditionary force. The English wanted them to be under British control, and Pershing said, "No way, José. We will be an independent operation, working in cooperation with the French and the English." And Korzybski had the same view about the Polish army that he was recruited for. But he couldn't pull that off. So it was eventually the Poles from America who went to France, served under French command initially, but then eventually Polish officers were placed in charge of the Polish units, who were still, however, part of the French army, providing replacements for French units, and so forth.

So he was very much aware of developments all around the world, philosophically, politically, economically. He was the first one who taught me, in *Manhood of Humanity*, that *capital must flow*. That was a big understanding for me about 40 years ago, that if capital isn't moving, it's worthless. That's why you shouldn't put it under your mattress.

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Transcript, Pt. 03

Go to  YouTube for part 3 of the video.

Pt 03, Description

In the third part of a three-part interview, Robert P. Pula, an eminent scholar on Alfred Korzybski and general semantics, talks about Korzybski's books *Manhood of Humanity* and *Science and Sanity* as well as the importance of Korzybski's biography, which he had been working on for some time.

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The interviewer: Bob, would you mind discussing a little bit about Korzybski's major works, *Manhood of Humanity* and *Science and Sanity*?

Pula: Okay, I may even say a little bit about the two "Time-binding" papers of 1924–1926. Korzybski's first major work was called *Manhood of Humanity*, which has been translated into Italian as the *Adulthood of Humanity* by an Italian feminist. As far as I know, it's a good translation, and I approve of that shift. Of course, Korzybski learned English starting in 1916. He published *Manhood of Humanity* in 1921. And of course, "manhood" as used in the English-speaking world, was the term that he learned, and of course that, to him, meant humanhood. So he was not being sexist, as we would say today, in using that term. *Manhood of Humanity*, I would suppose that the major thing that Korzybski formulated in that book, which became really the basis of what became general-semantics, fully enunciated in 1933 in *Science and Sanity*, was the notion of human beings functioning as time-binders.

Now, it had been observed ever since Aristotle that there were sort of classes of organic life: vegetative, animal, and human. What Korzybski accomplished with this definition is setting limits, a definition, *de fine*. The purpose of a definition is to set limits to whatever it is that you're defining. So he enunciated the vegetative life as chemistry- or energy-binding. He considered plants, for example, as solar batteries, – they stored solar energy – which were eaten by animals, whom he called space-binders, because although they were energy-binders,... and by "binding" he meant,... used it in the chemical, engineering sense, of organizing stuff to promote your own well-being, your own functioning, your own survival. So he called animals a space-binding class of life, because even though they were energy-binders like plants, they were not fixed in space-time, but they could move around, they could use space in order to promote their own survival. Humans he considered time-binders, because although they were also energy-binders, – if you've ever farted, you certainly know, that – and of course, obviously we humans are space-binders.

Doug studied the piano and other music in Warsaw. He studied economics in Canada. And he was born, I believe, in Glen Burnie before living much of his life in Baltimore – before binding space to an even greater extent. So we're obviously space-binders too, but in addition to that, a

very overarching difference, we are time-binders in the sense that we can use time to promote our own development, well-being, etc.

I am speaking a language that was invented by people long dead. I know a few things that were discovered and formulated by people long dead. So we can get from the past information, we can add to it in the present, and then ship it off to future generations. That's what Korzybski meant by time-binding. But the important thing is that he considered the time-binding to be the *defining* characteristic of the human class of life, and that's very important. He rejected theological and zoological explanations of what makes a human. He said, the one thing that humans do, no other class of life does, is bind time.

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Today, many of us in the field of general-semantics like to say, "bind space-time", because, as Korzybski well knew, that we, ever since Minkowski's mathematization of Einstein in 1908, I guess it was. Einstein's first relativity paper was in 1905. Ever since 1908, as Minkowski pointed out, we should not talk about space by itself or time by itself, – certainly not some objectified time – but space-time, recognizing that we have three measurements in space related to extended stuff, and one measurement in time. And I emphasize that time, for both Einstein and Korzybski, was simply a measurement, not a thing, in the sense of something that flows, you know. Still today, I would say the majority of people who talk about time, talk about it in an objectified way, as though it's some kind of something, like that camera that I'm talking into right now.

The interviewer: Or Chopin's Minute Waltz.

Pula: (laughing) Yeah, but the word that I have is that Chopin intended minute. And he did not intend for Liberace to put a stopwatch on his grand piano.

So anyway, that's the core notion of *Manhood of Humanity*. However, he talked about a lot of other things. He talked about this time-binding function leading, perhaps too optimistically, to an inevitable process of progress in human living. And he said that the progress was an exponential function of time, that you had work being done, but then over time it was constantly being added to and revised, etc., etc., so that it would be leading to <?>. He observed that this seems to work in scientific work and in engineering. For example, if engineers build a bridge and it collapses, they have the means by which to say, "Why in hell did it collapse? Let's fix it and go on." He observed that in social structures, we don't seem to do very well. We keep repeating the same errors over and over and over again because we're not sufficiently aware of what the hell we're doing at the social level. The sciences are characterized by a high degree of awareness of what is it that we're trying to do, what results are we trying to achieve, and how can we achieve them in a way which is paying attention to the facts that we have at hand. Time T, you know, today and tomorrow.

In this book, he also applies his notions to economics, biology, and engineering. I think those parts of the book are what caused the most excitement among practitioners in Korzybski's day.

The response to that book was really remarkable. Within two years, there had been four printings of it made necessary by the sales of the book. He was much reviewed and discussed. From that point on, he was a world figure.

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So, ask me a few more questions about *Manhood of Humanity* that you want to know about. I think what I just said is a fair but very overall summary of central themes in the book.

The interviewer: When was it written?

Pula: In 1920, and published in 1921.

The interviewer: And the book was distributed...

Pula: By 1923, it had the fourth printing.

The interviewer: Where was it distributed?

Pula: Where? Well, all over the world. It was published by E. P. Dutton, so it was an American publication, and it was marketed by Dutton.

The interviewer: Was it for general public consumption or was it for university scholarly type of work?

Pula: No, he intended everything that he wrote for general consumption. For the, you know, the famous intelligent man in the street, as one reviewer wrote, – and I think it was about *Manhood* – he said, “Never before has the average intelligent man in the street been more flattered.” It made a very big impact.

The interviewer: How was it received among intellectual circles here in the United States and in Europe?

Pula: Very well. He had correspondents from India writing, asking about that book and discussing the notions that he presented in that book, China – all over the world – lots of Europe, but much reaction in the Western Hemisphere.

The interviewer: After he wrote *Manhood of Humanity*, what triggered him to come up with an idea to author such a magnanimous tome as *Science and Sanity*? I mean, that is a very big and substantial work.

Pula: Well, he realized that... This was a process. He was educating himself as he went along. I've often pointed it out to people, especially with relation to *Science and Sanity*, who say, “Well, gee whiz, Korzybski wrote this book, and yet he often did things that were quite contrary to what he calls for in the book.” I said, “You have to realize that he was not only inventing this stuff, he was teaching, having to teach it to himself as he went along and try to make his behavior a reflection of what he was writing. That's a big struggle.”

The interviewer: Did the title of the book, *Science and Sanity*, come before the book was finished, or was it an afterthought?

Pula: It was actually suggested, – I just learned recently at this conference in Las Vegas, at the University of Las Vegas, Nevada – that someone who I don't remember quite at the moment suggested it to him just before he published it, someone that he was conferring with. A well-known name, but I just don't recall it right now. But before talking about *Science and Sanity*, we should mention, that after the publication of *Manhood of Humanity*, Korzybski was in great demand all over the country to lecture. He lectured at universities, he lectured at Masonic Lodges. He published, actually, in a Masonic journal called *The Builder*. They were very interested in his work. He lectured at the behest of bishops of all <?>, various clubs of intellectuals, business groups, political groups, US government groups, all kinds. This book really stirred up a lot of interest and commentary.

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He realized, of course, that *Manhood of Humanity* was really the starting point, because he had the notion to build a great system – not just to express opinions, but to organize all the stuff that he knew about and was thinking about into a *system*, which could be taught and imparted to people. His concern was to actually donate to the world a set of formulations that would ameliorate the human condition, as it's called. Well, this was a process. This was an evolution, the starting point of which was *Manhood of Humanity*.

In 1924 and 1926, he published two papers called "Time-Binding, the General Theory." Those two papers are a very succinct statement of what became *Science and Sanity*. So they're very important. Anybody who's a student of Korzybski's work cannot qualify as an adequate student, let's say, unless they have studied, not just read, but studied the "Time-Binding" papers. They are stated in a very lively, pungent language that is very, very, very impressive.

After the "Time-Binding" papers, he went on to start working on *Science and Sanity*. That was a process from 1926 to 1933, where in the last minute he was inserting changes because he decided to use the term "general semantics", which he had not been using before. *Science and Sanity*, for which I've written the preface to the fifth edition, which is now out in its second printing, which we already showed you before. A monster book. It's in its present form, counting the index, is 825 pages. Now, that's not exactly... what, a Hawthorne novel, is that what they're called. It's not even <?> or something like that. It's a tough book.

I didn't find it all that tough when I first read it. I had just graduated from a Jesuit college where I did pretty well in philosophy and Aristotelian Thomistic studies. And when I was first reading it, I was like... I was reacting as a good Aristotelian certaintist. And even though I had questioned some of the stuff I was hearing at Loyola, the Jesuit school that I attended in Baltimore, but as I read along, and particularly in the "Introduction to the Second Edition", which is a monograph-length thing, and has been published as a separate piece in itself, where I got the

neuro-linguistic point that I mentioned earlier today. And from that point on, I decided, well, I really have to start paying attention to what the hell this guy is writing. So I did.

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What did Korzybski say in *Science and Sanity* – in 800 plus pages that I can impart to you, in a few minutes? I can't do it! Well, I can give you some indication. I think the central thing to realize about *Science and Sanity* is that drawing on the work of others as a good time-binder should, Korzybski organized this material into a coherent system. Here, let me quote myself in this fly-leaf here. This is from the preface to the 5th edition:

Korzybski was not only a bold innovator, but also a broad synthesizer of available data into a coherent system. This system, when internalized and applied, can create a saner and more peaceful world, justifying the title of this book, *Science and Sanity*.

Now, the key to that effectiveness, it seems to me, is precisely Korzybski's paying attention to the formulating brain. "Brains are us", as my popular book is called to claim. And Korzybski realized that all of the stuff that he was doing, all the philosophical systems, etc., are produced by human brains in some language which these philosophers and scientists have learned from childhood, and that the structure of this language greatly predisposes us to see the world *in terms of that language structure*. Before Worf, who is often given credit for this so-called Worfian hypothesis, or the Sapir-Worf hypothesis, that the structure of a language greatly predisposes us to see the world in accordance with that language structure, Korzybski anticipated that independently. And that's the core of the importance of *Science and Sanity* and general-semantics.

Korzybski claimed that he was formulating the first non-aristotelian system with general-semantics as its methodology. First the system, and then now here are some tools that you can use to make the system work. To help things out. What did he mean by "non-aristotelian"? He certainly did not mean anti-aristotelian. In fact, Aristotle is one of the people whom he dedicates his book. These people to whom the book is dedicated, he says about them:

To the works of

40 or so famous thinkers, philosophers from Aristotle to Wittgenstein

which have greatly influenced my inquiry, this system is dedicated.

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So he's a very conscious time-binder. He knows where he got his stuff. What he's doing is making a system. So by "non-aristotelian" he meant a system that does not deny the aristotelian system, but is broader and goes beyond.

<?> a diagram in which he described the non-systems with relation to the systems with which they are non. And you have a circle and then a little circle inside. And in the case of Aristotle, this little circle would represent the aristotelian system, A . And the larger circle, which encircled the aristotelian system, would be labeled \bar{A} with a bar over top, which is a scientific way of indicating “non”, but not “anti”.

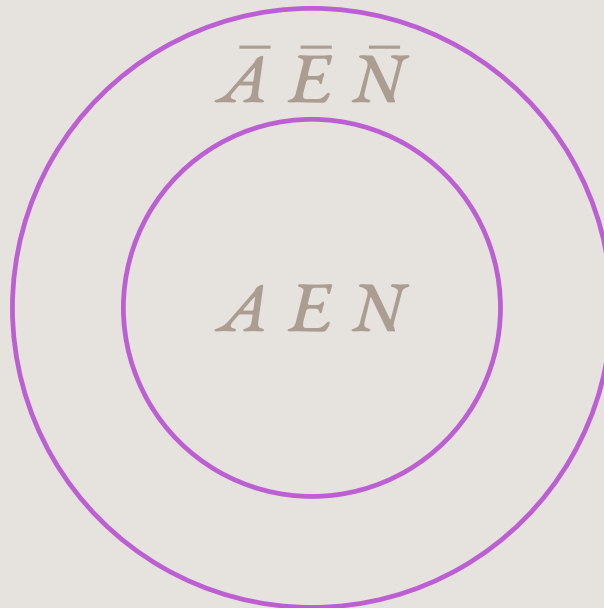


Fig. 1, *Science and Sanity: Introduction into Non-aristotelian Systems and General Semantics* (1933), 5th edition. Brooklyn, New York: International Non-Aristotelian Library/Institute of General Semantics, 1994, p. 97.

So in other words, the non-aristotelian system includes the aristotelian as a special case. The key point is the shift based on Łukasiewicz – and the Polish school in general – the shift away from two-valued orientation to a multi-valued orientation. He made the point that the two-valued orientation is often useful, there are many two valued situations, you know, if I jump in the water I either swim or drown, you know, no middle, no excluded third. The multi-valued says that as an orientation, if all you got is two values, that’s not enough to get along in life. You need a multi-valued orientation because many situations are not limitedly two-valued. So that’s the core of what Korzybski meant by “non-aristotelian”.

“General-semantics” is the term that he gave to his method for applying these scientifically based insights into action. We have things like the extensional devices. By “extensional” Korzybski meant an orientation where it was oriented to facts, to observation, to ultimately, events at non-verbal levels, which we’re trying to figure out. He created and introduced explicitly in the second edition introduction also what he called the extensional devices. And these are a series of techniques for avoiding allness, absolutes and so forth.

For example, dating. If we’re going to talk about, say, Germany, it’s very important in 2003 to recognize that Germany^{1933-to-1945} is not Germany¹⁹⁷⁰. When Willy Brant went to Warsaw <?> – at the ghetto memorial – is not Germany anytime after that. That can be applied to any major noun. It can be applied to yourself. I affirm that I, Bob Pula²⁰⁰³, am not Bob Pula¹⁹⁸⁰, or 1947, when I grad-

uated from high school. The only thing the same about me is my name, but what the name represents is different every second. And over significant stretches of time, *markedly* different. You know, every once in a while I'll see somebody I haven't seen for a while and they would say, "Oh, Bob, you never change!" I say, "That's what the hell you think." (laughing)

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Related to dating is indexing. Most, nouns are class terms. In fact, I suppose all of them are. We formulate class terms on the basis of similarities only, which we often mistakenly see as samenesses. Of course, there are no two things that are the same. Some are very similar, but there are also differences. The index, which is usually used as a subscript, reminds us of the differences within class terms. So here's the German example again. German₁, Beethoven, is not German₂, Adolf Hitler, is not German₃, Albert Schweitzer, who I guess was Swiss anyway, but Swiss-German. That's so important. I myself have so benefited from doing this kind of stuff as exercise, instead of remembering it in my writing... For one thing, I don't use terms like "all" and "everybody". They have dropped out of my vocabulary. I might say <?>, "All men are mortal", because the extensional evidence indicates that that's the case, but I certainly will not say, "All men are altruistic," or "All men are vicious," or, like Ron Smith says on the radio very often, "Well, that's human nature," with the implication being that 'all humans will do that', like go to war, commit murder, do whatever, "because that's human nature," which is a fixed thing, apparently, for him, which he's never bothered to define, of course. So it's a very liberating and humanizing series of techniques to structure your language in such a way that you don't make this mistake of treating members of the class as all the same.

If a person reads *Science and Sanity* and gets it, – and that could take some work for some people – but if they do that, including the third part, Book III, which gives a lot of basic scientific data, I would say that that's equivalent to, at least, three years of college. There is discussion of literature and poetry or references to it. Not much, you know, analysis or presentation. So we can't quite give a bachelor's degree to somebody who reads *Science and Sanity*, but we can sure as hell give three years credit, as far as I'm concerned, especially if that person is going to be getting a degree in science.

The interviewer: So when was *Science and Sanity* written? What year? Was it finished and actually published?

Pula: Published in 1933. Macmillan was interested in publishing it, as well as a few others, but Macmillan is the most important publisher that was interested, but they wanted to charge more than Korzybski wanted to charge for it. Korzybski wanted it to cost, – this was, of course, in the Depression – and he wanted it to be priced at a level that most people, at least, those who had a job, could buy it. And Macmillan wasn't willing to, especially since it was a big one. He wanted to sell it for \$5, which in the Depression was not a small amount, but it was too low for Macmillan, so they couldn't make an agreement. So Korzybski and Mira, his wife, decided they would publish it themselves. And they had it printed by the Science Press in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

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The interviewer: Briefly, how was it received?

Pula: It was received... It was like a bombshell as far as the reaction in the reading world was concerned, the academic world. Many, many of the leading scientists and formulators of various kinds of that time were very favorably impressed. Others were not. So it was very kind of... Basically, I would consider that he was in great detail telling the majority of the thinking community that they didn't know what the hell they were talking about. Some people didn't take that kindly. However, in the back, there are evaluations by some of the leading scientists, primarily of the time, and not just hard scientists, but those we call the soft sciences, like anthropology, Malinowski, Bertrand Russell, others, E. T. Bell, the mathematician, or the historian of mathematics, all wrote very favorable evaluations. But some others, notably Albert Einstein, did not.

Actually, I have conflicting evidence about Einstein. Korzybski reports that one of his students who talked to Einstein about this book thought that it had a lot of merit, so he was quoting Einstein in saying so. But there's also another famous anecdote in which Einstein was asked what he thought about *Science and Sanity*. He said, "That's a crazy book." So the reactions were quite mixed, but very, very impactful. So much so that – because Korzybski had so many requests for lectures and for study with him, that was precisely the reason why the Institute of General Semantics was founded in Chicago in 1938. So that there would be a place where people could come to study with the author of *Science and Sanity*.

Right after, well, as early as in 1935, I guess, there was already a first conference on general-semantics at the college in Washington State, Ellensburg College. And Korzybski started being taught, aside from all the lecturing that he was doing, being taught in lots of colleges and universities, sometimes taught as a separate subject in itself, notably at Northwestern University under Irving J. Lee, but very often as an aspect of, of course, communications or English speech, so forth and so on. So there was a terrific amount of response and influence.

The interviewer: Getting back to your biography, what do you hope to accomplish, number one, from having a biography out there, and number two, securing Korzybski's legacy.

Pula: First of all is just making him and his work better known than currently the case, but to let the thinking population of the world know that this stuff is available, and that if they study it and apply it, they can function better on a personal level, but also on a societal level, including all human activities. That's what has been driving me, we may say, without being fanatical about it, since 1960 or thereabouts.

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The interviewer: Now, to wrap things up, we discussed Korzybski's life, his infancy, the influences in his life, his writings. Between 1933 and 1950, when he passed away, a lot of things happened on this planet. The first one, obviously, is World War II.

Pula: 1933, the publication of *Science and Sanity*, the election of Hitler and his appointment thereby as Chancellor of Germany, and the election of Franklin Roosevelt, plus a bunch of other stuff.

The interviewer: So, there may be a lot of people out there who view Korzybski's writing as pre-scient, of value, but when you look at the carnage of World War II, of the insanity, so to speak, where does *Science and Sanity* fit into it all? Let's not forget, Korzybski's own country, Poland, was ravaged by World War II.

Pula: Indeed, they agonized over that throughout World War II.

The interviewer: Where is *Science and Sanity*? Where is *Science and Sanity* in the scheme of things?

Pula: I think the way to address that is to quote Korzybski and say,

I do not give a panacea.

What he saw himself as doing apparently is giving information organized as a system which, if applied, could ameliorate, not cure, but ameliorate that human situation. In other words, he was quite modest, but he was convinced that if people did *get* what he was talking about, and internalize it, as we say these days, and then act accordingly, *apply* what they have learned, that this would be a great boon to humankind.

The interviewer: Now, we have about a minute left. Describe what has happened with Korzybski's writings, his philosophy, since 1933, and can you apply it today in our society?

Pula: Oh, sure. I do that all the time. I no longer do much teaching in general-semantics, but I still do a lot of writing. I'm having a book of my selected writings called *Knowledge, Uncertainty, and Courage*, which will come out in 2004, published by Extensional Publishing in Pasadena, California. There is a lot of Korzybski on the Internet these days. There is a European Society for General Semantics, an Australian society, various societies in the United States, the Institute is now merging with the International Society for General Semantics and we've just made a down payment on our own independently standing building where we will have our seminars and lectures and so forth and so on and do our publishing work. The situation is a very active one at the moment and as I've told my colleagues, I said, "Look, if you had 50,000 general-semanticists in a stadium, what the hell would you do with them?" What we have to do is each of us just move along, even if it's at a snail's pace, and make our contributions until we coagulate and then the time-binding function will go on.

The interviewer: Well, thank you very much, Bob.

Pula: Cheers.

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